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AN
ADDRESS
DELIVERED AUGUST 14, 1844,
BEFORE THE
SOCIETY OF PHI BETA KAPPA
IN
YALE COLLEGE.
BY
HON. WILLIS HALL,
OF ALBANY, N. Y.

PRINTED BY E. L. HAMMEN.

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New Haven, August 15, 1844.

SIR—In behalf of the Connecticut Alpha of the Phi Beta Kappa Society, we would express to you their thanks for the Oration pronounced before them by you on the 14th inst., and respectfully request a copy of the same for publication.

Very respectfully yours,

S. W. S. DUTTON, } *Committee of Phi*
Jos. P. THOMPSON, } *Beta Kappa.*

Hon. WILLIS HALL.

New Haven, August 16, 1844.

GENTLEMEN—In compliance with the request of the Phi Beta Kappa Society, which you as their committee have done me the honor to communicate to me, I herewith send you the manuscript of the address read before them on the occasion referred to by you.

With lasting impressions of fraternal regard for my brethren of that Society, and many thanks to you, gentlemen of the committee, individually, I have the honor to be, with great respect,

Your obedient servant,

WILLIS HALL.

Rev. Messrs. S. W. S. DUTTON, Jos. P. THOMPSON.

A D D R E S S .

By the recent report of the Commissioner of Patents, it appears that the whole number of patents issued by the United States, from the establishment of the office, to January 8, 1844, scarce half a century, amounts to the incredible sum of thirteen thousand five hundred and twenty three. How have the elements been put to the question, and racked, and tortured, to extort their secrets for the benefit of man! Bacon declared at his day "there remained a world of sciences and inventions unknown;" and research has ever since been verifying the truth of this assertion, and developing the wonders which he foretold.

There is no limit to the career of improvement—from the humblest agency to the highest—from the patent razor-strop to the power-loom—from the improved churn, which curtails the painful labors of the housewife, to the applications of galvanism; its range is as wide as the elements. Look at galvanism alone; it already propels the car, it plates the wire, it writes upon steel, it has superseded the pains of lithotomy. It has robbed Jason of his honors; the golden fleece is no longer a fable.

The island of Great Britain, by means of its machinery, now performs more labor than the empire of China. The United States, by the application of new discoveries to arts and to agriculture, now accumulates more capital annually, than seventy millions would have accomplished two centuries ago. The powers of nature are inexhaustible, the discovery of one principle facilitates that of another, and multiplies the chances of some new inven-

tion—something, which like the application of steam, shall revolutionize society.

Hitherto the patents granted have been on the gradual increase, amounting to an average of two hundred and fifty per annum. Last year the number allowed amounted to five hundred. The spacious and beautiful edifice of the Patent Office is already crowded; the spectator is lost amidst the confused mass of improved ploughs, fanning mills, furnaces, chronometers, philosophical instruments, water wheels, and printing presses, to say nothing of the innumerable improvements in the various processes of the arts, as in the preparation of leather, glass, building materials, and wearing apparel.

This too, it will be observed, is the result of but a few years in an obscure quarter of the world. All Europe, with her two hundred and fifty millions of inhabitants, has been engaged in this career for two hundred years, and is now pursuing it with increased ardor and success.

The prize held out is splendid beyond the dreams of antiquity. The fame of Fulton, the wealth of Watt, dazzle the eyes of the projector. Whatever is most prized or sought for among men is given without measure and without stint to successful ingenuity. It is a well ascertained law, that the increase of the human family is limited to a supply of the means of support. Wherever new channels of industry are opened, nature's children seem to rush in to feast on her exuberance. What philanthropist will not rejoice at the masses thus added to the great sum of human enjoyment!—at the millions that thus become participants of the joys of this living and breathing world! What Christian will not thank God for the added myriads who will swell the chorus of his praise! What man but will exclaim with Bacon, "all knowledge, limited by religion, is to be referred to *use and action*!"

The world is now nearly six thousand years old. Strike from the transmitted wealth of the past the accumulation of the last three centuries, and what have we left! Little besides the ground we stand upon. Go back but a few years, and all beyond is a barren waste. [Proud philosophy! She has been the guide and controller of mind, from the time of Aristotle to that of Bacon, a period of more than two thousand years. But where is her patent office?] What has she done for the physical advancement of man? The same mental labor which has been expended, if properly directed, would have filled the world with the comforts and conveniences of life, abrogated that vast portion of crime which springs from poverty, and elevated the moral condition of man far above its present standard.

I will, with your permission, dwell a moment upon this ancient barrenness, and the vicious tendency of the schools, and ascertain their cause and contrast them with the productiveness of recent times, and close with a few remarks upon *utility* as a motive and a rule of human conduct. The wisdom gathered from a perpetual recurrence to the errors of the past, is the surest guide to future improvement.

The *discipline* and *methods* of instruction of the ancients, were in many respects mischievous. They made a mystery of knowledge. Plato declares that "it is a difficult thing to discover the Creator of the universe, and being discovered it is impossible and would even be impious to expose the discovery to vulgar understanding." He did not indeed close the door of his school, nor exact an oath of secrecy from his pupils, like Pythagoras; but he, as well as Aristotle and most of the philosophers, had his esoteric and exoteric doctrines. The first of these they taught only to the select few; the second were the

doctrines which they promulgated to the world. In teaching their students to love philosophy, they made them esteem themselves; in training them to aspire to an elevated object, they led them to look with scornful pride upon the mass beneath, for whom they professed to have no regard, and with whom it was their highest boast to have no sympathy. All this tended to create unworthy distinctions among men, and to secure the sway of arbitrary power. Plato, Aristotle, and other ancient teachers, are said to have dressed themselves splendidly, and with as much regard to scenic effect upon their schools, as stage-players upon their audience.

This affectation of peculiarity in dress and manners, has tinged the habits of the studious world even to the present day. The costume of all professions until recently, was invariably the flowing gown; the professions of divinity and law, in Europe, still retain the dress of Aristotle, and it is feared, cling to many other vanities of his school, more puerile and degrading.

Thus much for the mere habits and discipline of their schools. Their *doctrines* exercised a still more important influence; many of them were radically wrong, and tended only to increase the superstition of the age. All believed that matter was eternal, and most that it was sentient. Pythagoras believed in a soul of the world—that all matter was animated with a *spirit*—that there was but one soul in the universe, which was all-pervasive, and of which the souls of individuals were parts.

Plato is said by some of his followers to have taught, that every object possessed an unconscious soul. Thales and some of the earlier philosophers, did not separate mind from motion; they taught that the magnet was animated with a spirit. This was fostering the deepest source of vulgar superstition—that matter, especially such as

moves, feels. Hence the bleeding bush of Virgil, from which issued the voice of Polydorus. Hence the enchanted forest of Tasso; Rinaldo sees his beloved Chlorinda start from every pine, and every myrtle is embraced by the beautiful and imploring Armida. No wonder that the unreasoning but sympathetic multitude, should people every grove with hamadryads, every brook with nymphs, and that every breeze should be laden with the wailings of spirits. No wonder that such men, with such instructions, should become, like the Athenians, "in all things too superstitious."

If poets are to be literally considered as *creators*, the true poets of antiquity were their philosophers. Their grave theories of the formation of the universe, surpassed any thing ancient or modern in wildness of invention. Considered as intended for sober truth, the fairies and the genii of the Arabian Nights Entertainment, do not make such draughts upon credulity.

Plato, and after him his pupil Aristotle, imagined the universe to consist of ten spheres, like ten concave globes, one within the other; in the outward, an infinite circle of *cerulean*, silent, motionless and self-willed, they placed the Omnipotent; next came the *crystalline* sphere, or *primum mobile*, which receiving its motion from the motionless First Cause, communicates it through the universe. It is thus described by the Portuguese poet:

" Within its shining frame,
In motion swifter than the lightning's flame,
Swifter than sight the moving parts may spy,
Another sphere whirls round its rapid sky;
Hence motion darts,—its force impulsive draws,
And on the other orbs impresses laws."

The eighth sphere in the system of these philosophers, is called the starry heavens; this is the spangled vault which

presents itself to the naked eye. The seven planets were supposed to revolve in the seven subordinate spheres, to which they gave names.

It is strange that a theory so fanciful and so puerile, should have gained the credence of mankind, during a period commencing four centuries before Christ, and terminating with the general adoption of the Christian religion, about four centuries after; but it is obvious, that this theory, as well as most of the speculations of these philosophers, such as the numbers of Pythagoras, and the ideas or plastic forms of Plato, were more calculated to cultivate and strengthen the imagination than the reason.

But bad as were the *doctrines* of the ancient schools, the utter *perversion* of the *true object* of study, was the capital error of the ancient philosophy. They attempted to invert the order of acquisition; they uniformly endeavored to abstract the soul from the body, and educate it separately, instead of considering it as God made it, and educating them together. They constantly aimed to make men love *virtue*, or immutable truth, or some other abstract and metaphysical name, while they should have striven to make them love labor. The last was humble, but practicable; the first lofty, but incomprehensible and impossible. By saying that they inverted the order of acquisition, I mean to affirm, that virtue is merely an inference—that, by inculcating a love of labor, the advantages of the arts, the love of our fellow men, the excellency of contributing to the enjoyments of human life, the love of virtue would have followed. Seneca says, "It is not the office of philosophy to teach men how to use their hands; the object of her lessons is to form the soul." But the only way to teach men how to form the soul, is to teach them first how most judiciously to use the hands.

Thus we see, that while their discipline and doctrines served to swell the pride of man, inflame the imagination, widen the gulf between the different classes of the human family, pamper power by inculcating authority, their visionary, speculative and fruitless object brought the blight of barrenness upon two thousand years of human thought.

Let it not be supposed, that it is a part of my plan to enter upon a crusade against the learning of the ancients. No man can appreciate more highly than I do, their contributions to geometry, and the almost perfect models which they have bequeathed us in every department of belles-lettres. Their perfection only renders regret the more poignant, that their efforts in the physical and moral sciences had not received a more useful and practical direction. The most enthusiastic apologist sees not more clearly, that it is unfair to judge them by a modern standard. Their books were few, and obtained by great labor or expense; men of thought were rare; there was no interchange of the intellectual and moral wealth of nations,—all was at first confined to the Greek, afterwards to the Greek and Latin. The progress of science had been continually interrupted by wars and commotions, and at last it was engulfed by one universal uprising of the elements of savagery. Besides, the depositories of their limited learning have been from time to time annihilated. The first library, that of Pisistratus, was destroyed by Xerxes; the celebrated collection of Aristotle was scattered soon after his death,—most of it went into that of the Ptolemies at Alexandria, which was consumed by the rash and ignorant soldiers of Julius Cæsar. The library of the Roman empire, preserved in the temple of Apollo, was destroyed by lightning. In later times the fire of Omar will be remembered, the bigotry of Pope Gregory, and the vanity of Almaman, to each of which the

most precious remains of antiquity fell a sacrifice. Still, abundance remains to show the character and direction of the ancient philosophy. Much that was valuable, though it has now become superseded by modern discoveries, has remained to recent times as a monument of the extraordinary genius of those sages, who could so indelibly stamp their own minds on the great current of human thought. We can not forget that the astronomical theory of Pythagoras differs little from that of Copernicus, or that the atomic theory of Epicurus seems to be demonstrated by modern chemistry. Recent experiments have also proved the truth of Plato's theory, that bodies are combined in numerical proportion.

In process of time, the ancient schools were swallowed up in the modern professions. The theories of Epicurus and Aristotle on physics, were especially regarded by physicians, although the authority of this latter writer was paramount on almost every subject of human investigation. In the church, although at first denounced, his writings were at length admitted as a commentary on the Bible, and the commentary was read with more zeal, and deemed of more weight than the text.

The doctrines of the Academy harmonized more with the principles of the Christian religion. Indeed the gospel of St. John opens with an expression which can not fail to be recognized as the language of the Academy, by all who remember the *λόγος* of Plato. The professors of jurisprudence may be said to be the descendants of Zeno, —at least the subtle disquisitions of the Stoics had this practical effect, that they furnished the lawyers with maxims, definitions and distinctions, on which they have erected a noble and far-extending science. It is right however to say, that their definitions were never intended for any such practical purpose; they pursued no such contemptible

object; they disdained to be useful. They never sought the forum,—they would not tarnish their dignity with the dust of the courts; but the lawyers sought *them*. Jurisprudence was formerly called philosophy, and its professors, divided into *Πράκτοι* and *Ἀπρακτοι*, were called philosophers. No one was thought qualified to practice law, who had not spent years in studying philosophy; that is, the wordy, subtle, quibbling philosophy of the Stoics. Their language was noble; it was the language of the gods. Their promises were more magnificent than Golconda,—their performance “as poor as winter.” To the followers of Zeno we are indebted for that great maxim, which lies at the corner of our republican edifice, that “all men are born free and equal.” It is a truth of world-wide importance, and while we express our boundless gratitude to them, we must admit that, in *practice*, they were the most subservient and basest sycophants of arbitrary power,—proclaiming the natural liberty of man, and at the same time kneeling to Tiberius, justifying the cruelties of Nero, and flattering every despot that ever sat on a Roman or barbarian throne.

They too were the first to discover and proclaim the absurdity of human *bondage*. “That man,” they exclaimed, “to whom all other things were given as property, should be *himself* the subject of property, is monstrous. Man the slave of man,—the Anthropophagi, with heads beneath their shoulders, were not so gross a violation of the nature of things.” Noble language! The whole world listened; the poor slave erected himself,—bright hope beamed once more in his haggard eye. But the Stoic speaks again: “*Slaves are things*, and *things* are justly under the dominion of man.” The slave again bent beneath his burden, and his hopes vanished forever! This is a fair specimen of the fruitlessness, verbiage and equivocation of

their proud philosophy. So with reference to utility, they held, according to Cicero, that "from birth the animal, human and brute, directs his attention to conciliating or procuring those things which are preservative of himself." But, though they admitted the truth of the utilitarian doctrine, they were the most useless and trifling of men; they soared infinitely above its practical application. They were constantly haunted by a spectre which they called the "*dignity* of human nature," which frightened them from every thing useful, and gave them a strained and stilted morality. Bacon says, that "it is no less true in this human kingdom of knowledge, than in God's kingdom of heaven, that no man shall enter into it except that first he become as a little child." Their foundation was right; had they built upon it they would have constructed a refuge from sorrow and from shame; but their pride ruined all. Theirs was a philosophy of great swelling words, but of paltry results.

Two great misfortunes befell the Christian religion; the first and the minor one was its early union with philosophy. The most distinguished of modern philosophers has said, that "the prejudice hath been infinite that both divine and human knowledge have received by the intermingling and tempering the one with the other—as that which hath filled the one full of heresies, and the other full of speculative fictions and vanities." The one threw its robe of pride over the coarse garment of the fisherman. The other subjected to the vain fallibility of human reason what was intended only for the eye of faith, and gave up its sacred mysteries and revelations to be mingled with the vagaries of philosophy.

The second, and by far the greater evil, was the union of temporal and spiritual authority. The conversion of Constantine, and the consequent elevation of the humble reli-

gion of the cross to the divided throne of the world—the union of church and state—although at the time deemed an event glorious in itself, has been proved by the experience of several centuries of a world sunk in darkness and in slavery, to have been most baleful to human happiness, and most disastrous to the Christian religion. Had Constantine continued to persecute and oppress, religion would have continued as at first, humble and useful, full of sympathy for the multitude, dispensing its hopes and consolations to those who most require them. Its progress would have been that of the flood, first covering the humble valleys of the poor, and at last completing the work of universal charity by embracing the high places of power. It would then have taken possession of temporal thrones as a conqueror to be obeyed, and as the friend of man to be loved; not as a jealous equal to be conciliated, or a *particeps criminis* to be watched and feared.

But this ill-omened alliance was now complete, the church of Christ, civil government, and the philosophy of the schools.

Self-conceited *philosophy*, bloated with her vain-glorious pride, and black with hatred of the ignoble vulgar, proclaimed that the mass of men were born to be slaves.

The *church*, under the insidious maxim that the command of God *makes* right, and that the decrees of the church are his voice, erected the monstrous fallacy of the infallibility of Rome.

Civil *government*, borrowing the pregnant maxims of her obsequious allies, stamped with a divine sanction the power of the worst of rulers, and enforced with a divine command the slavery of the people.

I will not advert to the darkness of the middle ages, consequent upon this conspiracy against human rights. Never was the intellect so poor, and never so vain of its

achievements. The mind was doomed for centuries to describe the same idle and never ending circle. All minds were drawn into these magic vortices; all thought was employed in physics, in ascertaining the nature and extent of stellar influence, casting nativities, seeking for the stone of transmutation, or the elixir of immortality; and in metaphysics, in solving the grave questions—Whether “spirit has essence, independent of existence?” Whether an angel can see in darkness? Whether God loves the greatest possible non-existing angel better than the smallest existing insect? Abelard on his return to the University of Paris, after an absence of two years, says that “he found the students still discussing the same old questions—whether spirit has extension? whether it can be in two places at the same time?” and such idle puerilities, the decision of which is utterly impossible, and as immaterial as it is impossible. It was not through apathy, that the mind retrograded from its natural onward march of improvement. At no period have the colleges and schools of Europe been more thronged; two or three thousand are said to have crowded to hear the lectures of Abelard, and several equally popular schools of law and philosophy are said to have existed at the same time in England. What then was the cause of the extreme paucity or the utter absence of results from so much mental labor? It was the utter neglect of that immutable law of our moral and physical nature, that man seeks his own preservation. This was considered and treated as a deformity to be concealed, not as a principle to be educated as destined to give complexion to all our conduct. Men refused to glide forward easily on the current of nature, but chose rather to offer a useless opposition; hence all the barrenness, all the absurdities, all the mysteries and the mischiefs which we have described, from the curious imagin-

ings of Pythagoras to the senseless jargon of the scholastics. They were blinded by their pride. Philosophy disdained to be useful! Science scorned an alliance with the arts!

The first faint effort of common sense to throw off some portion of the incubus which the schools had heaped upon her, was made by the *nominalists* in the eleventh century. The dispute between them and the *realists* was not, as has been supposed, some vain question of scholastic discussion,—it was a struggle against the materialism of thought. Plato and Aristotle maintained, that the ideas of genera and species were impressed or daguerreotyped upon matter at its creation. The nominalists contended, that these universal ideas had neither form nor essence, and were no more than mere terms and nominal representations.

Long and eventful was the contest; all Europe was disturbed for centuries with the noise of the conflict. On the part of the realists were enlisted the three great allies, the church, the state, and the schools of the philosophers. On the part of the nominalists the more distinguished names were John the sophist, Robert of Paris, Rosaline of Compagne, Abelard, Porphyry, Occam, Gerson, and Luther. But, after bloody persecutions, martyrdoms, even wars among the nations, the nominalists triumphed; and their triumph maimed, if it did not destroy, one of the tripartite alliance. The dead weight of philosophy was gone, the mind became more buoyant; one of the chains was broken; it became more free. What was left unfinished by this contest was completed by Luther at the Reformation. He grappled with another of the allies, and strove to restore religion to its original simplicity, purity, and humility. He separated it in a great measure from its disastrous connection with temporal power. It no longer

pressed with crushing weight upon human rights, but became, as it was first intended, the corner-stone of the fabric of human liberty. Reformers sprung up every where, responsive to his voice. Men of distant nations, who were unacquainted with each other, who spoke not the same language,—Zuinglius of Switzerland, Melancthon and Erasmus of Germany, Latimer and Coverdale of England, Farel and Lefevre in France,—heard and understood. They were the mountain-tops watching over the silent and mist-covered valleys beneath; and the vividness and rapidity of the work of the Reformation, reminds us of the poet's description of a thunder storm among the Alps:

“From peak to peak leaps the live thunder”—

not from one lone cloud, but

—“every mountain now hath found a tongue,
And Jura answers from her misty shroud,
Back to the joyous Alps, which cry to her aloud.”

Thus the other of the great oppressors of human thought was removed, or rather converted into a friend. The disastrous alliance was broken up, the mind stood forth dis-embarrassed but uncultivated; untaught, but at the same time unbiassed. Thus far it was not advanced, but only disincumbered; stripped for the race, but no steps taken in its career;—prepared for any direction that might be given to it.

At this time the immortal Bacon arose. We can not sufficiently express our admiration at the perfect preparation which was made for his appearance; no character of the drama ever entered upon the stage more apropos to the development of the plot. A few years sooner and his voice would have been drowned in the clamor of the schools; a few years later, and the mind would again have received a false direction from which the powers of Verulam would have been inadequate to recall it.

He commenced, not so much by establishing a new philosophy, as by divesting the mind of *all* philosophy,—by planting it firmly upon the rocks of *common sense* (called by a distinguished writer the “*genius of humanity*”) and *common experience*. Although he calls his method the *Novum Organum*, to distinguish it from the old *Organon* of Aristotle, it might with equal propriety be called the *nullum organum*, that is, no “*artificial method*”—“the way of nature,” or those ordinary teachings of experience pursued equally in the highest investigations of science, and by the brutes themselves in seeking shelter from the peltings of “the pitiless storm.”

His predecessors, as we have seen, were too proud to be useful; their shot, elevated above mortality, but too weak to reach the stars, spent its force upon the idle air. He, on the other hand, in his own quaint language declares, that “the access to his work has been by that port or passage which the divine Majesty doth infallibly continue and observe; that is the felicity wherewith he hath blessed a *humility* of mind, such as rather laboreth to spell and so by degrees to read the volumes of his creatures, than to solicit and urge, and as it were to invoke a man’s own spirit, to divine and give oracles unto him.” Their love of abstract speculation led them to make even physics metaphysical. He utterly disregarded metaphysics, except so far as they contributed to some practical and useful end.

No wonder that these opposite courses should produce the most opposite results. Theirs it has been the object of this digression to illustrate. His are before and around us. Utility found no place in their vocabulary; he inculcates it in every sentence as the only proper guide and object in all our pursuits.

Already have the *commoda vitæ* accumulated immensely under his system, which is destined ultimately to enrich the whole human family, and go far to eradicate poverty and crime.

I do not mean to confound mere *practical* philosophy with utilitarianism. It is admitted that in our own time Bentham has gone farther than Bacon, and has considered utility not only as a guide and an end, but as a motive of action, and as a law of our nature. Whether his theory be true or false, it must be admitted that his reasonings from this law of our nature have been wonderfully successful in pointing out right qualities in governments and legislation.

The most distinguished philosopher of modern times has facetiously intimated that the fall of our first parents was caused by the too earnest discussion of the metaphysical question of the constitution of good and evil. Thus warned, I shall be careful not to commit so great a sin.

The utmost apparent diversity has prevailed among modern philosophers, as to the essential quality which enters into all right action. Cumberland calls it *practical reason*; Grotius, the preservation of human *society*; Cudworth follows Plato and his school in supposing it *virtue*; Clark, the *fitness of things*; Wollaston, *truth*; More, the *boniform faculty*. This quaint name gave rise to what Shaftsbury and his followers to the present day have called the *moral sense*; Malebranche calls this quality the love of *universal order*; Butler, *conscience*; Adam Smith, *sympathy*; Hartley, *association of ideas*; Tucker, *translation of ideas*; Brown, *suggestion of ideas*. But this diversity is only apparent. They may all, with sufficient precision, be thrown into two great classes—viz. those who suppose that all our notions have an intellectual origin, and those who believe that some of them at least spring from emo-

tion; those who suppose that all action arises from instinctive and intellectual nature, having reference solely to our self-preservation, modified by our relations and guided by experience, and those who suppose that all action, or so much at least as relates to right and wrong, springs from some involuntary emotion, or separate moral nature superior to the intellect, which acts not in reference to self, but to some abstract and perfect rule of right and wrong.

To this last theory there seem to be three objections—it is *unproved*—it is *unnecessary*.

“Nec Deus intessit
Nisi sit dignus vindice nodus,”

is a maxim as true in metaphysical philosophy as in the art of poetry. Even Stuart, Mackintosh and others, the great champions of a moral sense, admit that it may have been an after growth. They insist that there is an apparent disinterestedness, whether it arise from an original cause or a subsequent result. This is admitting the whole question. The utilitarians contend for no more. They do not deny the existence of liberality, of benevolence, of charity, of heroism, and of magnanimity, and that they all spring apparently in some instances from a disinterested impulse. So the unreflecting suppose, that they see the distance and shape of objects, although it is certain that these are only the result of judgment from their appearance. The utilitarians define charity, for instance, the rejection of a little present indulgence in favor of a great future happiness.

Another objection to this theory is, that it confounds the distinction between a motive and a criterion. All acknowledge the existence of a moral taste as well as a natural one, and that it is equally liable to be depraved; but it no more originates moral action, than natural taste can be said to originate a breakfast.

Again, this theory was constructed to obviate a supposed difficulty of predicating guilt or innocence of human action; but it is obvious that there is as much merit in obeying a necessity of our nature called self-love, as in obeying one dignified with the title of a moral sense; nor is there any more sin in violating the laws of a moral sense, than in violating those laws of self-preservation which our all-wise Creator has impressed upon our nature.

On the whole perhaps the simplest, the safest, and the truest principle, is that all action, whether good or bad, voluntary or involuntary, springs from the laws of nature, reason and instinct, directed to *self-preservation*, as the motive and the end. It is at least a safe criterion. Sir James Mackintosh, although an ardent advocate of disinterested emotions, declares that "the whole sagacity of the wisdom of the world, may be safely challenged to point a case in which virtuous dispositions, habits and feelings, are not conducive in the highest degree to the happiness of the individual." So that even by the confession of its enemies, utility is always a *safe guide* to virtuous conduct.

In favor of self-preservation, as a law of our nature, universal analogy may be adduced; the form of every vegetable that grows, the unerring instinct of every animal, point to their self-preservation. Natural religion deduces the conclusion of an omniscient architect, from these evidences of design. All the functions of our bodies, on which life depends, the beating of our hearts, the breathing of our lungs, are placed beyond the reach of our volition, but are conducted exclusively with reference to our preservation. All our instincts, all our propensities, all our passions, although often perverted from this purpose, have an obvious reference to the same object. The same divine architect, who contrived the involuntary, made

also the voluntary part of our natures, and analogy would incline us to the belief, that he pursued the same object in both cases.

I am aware of the scorn with which this doctrine has been spurned by distinguished men; they have deemed it unworthy a good man, to be governed by no higher motive than his own greatest happiness. It does not make the gulf which separates the learned from the ignorant, wide enough to suit their pride; they wish not to be better than, but to be different from the vulgar mass; they labor to escape the disgrace of a community with mankind; they run upon the tops of their toes and would fain persuade the world that they fly; they would build up a sort of hero-worship. The only faculties of the vulgar herd which they would cultivate, are those of wonder, reverence and admiration.

But if utility is denounced on account of its humility, the charge will avail little with those who think with Bacon, that this is the only door of entrance into the kingdom of knowledge, and who remember that the same charge was made from the same source against the religion of Christ. If it raises what is humble and prostrates what is elevated, it only assimilates the more to the divine command "to love our neighbor as ourself." But it may truly be said, if it is low, it is at least intelligible; if we have a humble, we certainly have a safe guide,—if it does not conduct us to an impossible virtue, it will never lead to crime,—if it does not make us gods, it will surely make us better men.

Much of this opposition to utility, has doubtless arisen from increasing admiration of German transcendentalism. The influence of that philosophy is yet limited, but it is all employed to sap the foundations of laws, government and religion. However pure may be some of its pro-

fessors, they are destined to share the fate of poor Epicurus and his philosophy. Abandoned men perverted his doctrines to sanction every thing most debasing and profligate. The name of the most abstemious of men, the anchorite of philosophers, became synonymous with indulgence. These men are struggling to bring back the mysteries, the folly and the fruitlessness of the old philosophy. They are imitating the miserable pride of the disciples of Zeno, by preferring form to substance, seeking rather to excite astonishment, by clothing old truths in new paradoxes, than by discovering new truths and explaining them to the world in plain language; they prefer the surprise excited by the slight of hand of the mountebank, or the tricks of a juggler, to the honest praise of a good mechanic.

It is with no ordinary pride, that I turn to this celebrated seat of the muses, and find its professors still foremost among the champions of sound learning and far reaching utility. They still inculcate in their lessons, that the only object of science is to enrich the world; the final use of all learning, but to strengthen the judgment, and to enable it more certainly to secure the ultimate good.

This new philosophy, uprooting and prostrating with blind hostility, the bulwarks as well as the abuses of society, solicits them in vain. This monstrous creation of a foreign soil has no place here; this misshapen production of vanity, fermenting with the admitted wrongs of foreign institutions, dares not approach these sacred portals.

The space allowed me will barely permit of illustrating the principle of utility in some of the more ordinary relations of life.

This philosophy beholds man with hopes, with longings, with thoughts, stretching far beyond this world, which nothing but the revelations of religion can satisfy. In the

various misfortunes and sorrows incident to this life, she discovers that the more stately preachings of philosophy about fortitude—the superiority of mind to physical ills—are empty mouthings, and that nothing but the soothing hopes of religion have been found to alleviate the distress of mental suffering; consequently she leads man to religion. Other philosophies, proud, conceited, self-sufficient, would be themselves the physicians, she only the handmaid; they aspire to be the rivals, she the humble follower; and when her temporal task is done, she resigns her charge to the fruition of an immortality she has given her humble aid to inculcate throughout life.

Again, the simple maxim of the pursuit of individual good, becomes in society the pursuit of the good of the greatest number. No additional element whatever intermingles with this fundamental maxim of voluntary society; it is simply the pursuit of individual good modified by each man's social relations. When individualism, says Guizot, is absolute, society is impossible; society is necessary for protection, and government necessary for society. The individual is compelled by his nature and the circumstances which surround him to become a member of society, and the only condition on which he can be admitted is to pursue the greatest good of the greatest number. The same principle which leads to the formation of governments, dictates also, when undisturbed, that these governments shall be popular in their form. This appears by the following illustration; the whole world has concurred in the remark of Montesquieu, which I shall therefore assume—that "honesty is the principle of republics, honor of monarchies, and fear of despotisms." It can not be for the greatest happiness that all should be governed by fear; despotism must therefore be rejected.

Honor is defined, the distinction of one above many ; it can not be for the greatest happiness of the greatest number, that the majority should be oppressed by the elevation of a few at their expense ; monarchy and every species of aristocracy must therefore be rejected. As there is no other kind of government but that of the many, it follows that this species of government alone meets the terms of this proposition. The same thing may be demonstrated in various ways. That the dictates of utility require that government be administered on this principle, appears from the fact that such a government is more likely to be *right* than any other.

The idiosyncrasy of every man leads him to take his own particular view of every subject presented for his decision. Almost all the differences in life arise from viewing the same thing from different points. The more numerous the voters in any community, the more numerous the points of view of any given subject, and the less the probability that any circumstance will escape the observation of those who are required by law to decide upon its adoption or rejection.

Utility dictates such a form of government for another reason,—that it is more likely to be safe and enduring, because the government, being influenced by practical men of every pursuit, will be less likely to come in collision with any great interest. Such a collision often produces revolts and revolutions in other governments. But even if a disturbance should occur, there is no danger of overthrowing the government, for it is built upon the maxim of the greatest good to the greatest number. They can not enjoy more, and they will voluntarily accept of no form of government which gives less.

Utility suggests still another reason for this form of government, which is indeed but a branch or corollary of the

last. It is capable of indefinite improvement. In other governments, admitted salutary reforms are rejected through fear of innovation. "Monarchs are perplexed through fear of change." When one or a few are conscious of having arrogated to themselves advantages which belong to the body at large, they are naturally solicitous to retain them. The foundation of such a government is narrow and weak. It stands like an inverted pyramid. Improvement in any one particular may lead to the overthrow of the whole edifice. But in a government founded upon this principle, which we have seen can not in the nature of things be overthrown, experiment may follow experiment like the waves; innovation has no terrors; novelties are invited and freely examined, and improvements even in fundamental law adopted without injury. There is no limit to this law but the injury which arises from change itself. Enough has been said to show that this maxim lies at the foundation of democratic government. Modern improvement in representation has obviated the principal objection, and rendered it accessible even to the most extended nations. Nor is it a sanguine anticipation, that this principle of the greatest good will ultimately prevail throughout the world. It is a law of human nature, as much as gravity is a law of matter; and in the chances and changes of human affairs, as men and nations are placed in favorable circumstances for its action, it will surely develop itself. Thus much for the application of this principle to the *forms* of government.

Its adaptations to the *administration* of government, are equally familiar to every American; but the illustration of the wide application of the principle of utility, and the repeated injunction to recur often to first principles, must excuse its triteness. A government conducted on this principle, requires that all its functions should be dischar-

ged by the people themselves. By the people themselves I mean, in contradistinction from a class salaried, educated and set apart for any particular duty. Every citizen becomes in turn a magistrate, a soldier or a jurymen. To say nothing of the faithful, honest and economical discharge of these functions, secured by such a system, its indirect benefits, by educating the people, by accustoming them to the exercise of power, by identifying them occasionally with the government itself, are incalculable. In this point of view, who can estimate the advantages arising from *jury duty*. I venture to say it does more towards disseminating among the people a practical knowledge of their rights and duties, than our schools, academies, and every other means of instruction. The accustoming the citizen to command as well as obey, tends to elevate the lowest, by filling them with a sense of their importance and responsibility; while on the other hand, it effects a comparative depression in the more elevated, and constantly teaches them a practical lesson,—to honor the law which is above them all.

Another inference which arises from the application of this principle is, that all should take an active interest in public affairs. All have a voice either by themselves, their husbands, their brothers, or their fathers; it is their duty to express it, and whatever is duty can not with propriety be called disreputable. I refer not merely to the act of voting, but to the preliminary discussions and the acquisition of all the necessary means of influence. An active interest in the public measures of the day is often and generally denounced as discreditable. The thought is of foreign birth, and most truly it is alien to the institutions of this country. In those nations where the citizens have no voice, and can only influence public measures through sycophancy and flattery of the great, politics are indeed

idle if not disgraceful. Formerly it was considered disreputable to take a part in religion; all theological discussion was left to the priest. Even many of the Doctors of the Reformation thought it dangerous to put the Bible in the hands of the people. More enlightened views have prevailed in modern times; every man, whether priest or layman, is responsible on his own account; no man can answer for another in matters of conscience; neither can he in matters of state,—the responsibility may differ in degree, but not in kind. As I love my country, I earnestly pray that she may never cease to be agitated by political discussion. While men think and speak freely, they will be divided in opinion; and parties will never give way but to the torpor which precedes death.

Many suppose that the powers of government should always be restricted to their direct object, that is, to the protection of persons and of property. Others suppose that they may also be advantageously employed in securing *collateral* benefits to their respective nations. In every government there is always a large mass of power conferred upon its organs ordinarily inert, to be used only in the event of war or some extraordinary emergency. The great problem which has entered more or less into the political discussions of ancient and modern times, is, shall this great unused reservoir of public power remain idle, or be employed to feed the conduits of private affairs.

We will refrain from giving examples of these two theories reduced to practice among modern nations; but among the ancients, Sparta with her black broth, and iron money, and her utter contempt for all the decencies, moralities and comforts of life, is an eminent example of the first. She struggled only for existence, and continued five or six centuries. A straight line upon the map of history, contains all that is worth remembering of her story. Ath-

ens is an illustration of the other theory ; that republic facilitated in some degree the private pursuits of her citizens. She has sunk also, but has left a long train of brilliant and undying light behind her, in the glorious achievements of her sons.

Among modern political philosophers, Rousseau is a conspicuous advocate of the first school. He was not only opposed to any aid from government in advancing the arts of civilized life, but rather recommended all men to become "unsophisticated" again, like crazy Lear and poor Tom, and seek the independence of their original forests. Adam Smith is an equally illustrious example of the other school. He first reduced the economy of nations to a science, and taught the art of so using their powers as to enrich themselves and their subjects.

The views of those who disapprove of any collateral exercise of the powers of government, are derived exclusively from foreign institutions, and have no application to our own. A reference to the principle of the *greatest good*, to which we have so often had occasion to advert, will satisfactorily solve this most vexed question. In governments founded and conducted upon this principle, such an interference is not only safe, but generally in the highest degree beneficial. In this case the benefits and the burthens are equally divided ; and if any given measure is not found to the advantage of the majority, it is sure to be repealed before material injury can accrue. On the other hand, in a government administered for the benefit of a few, where the advantages are monopolized by the rulers and their sycophants, and the burthens thrown upon the nation at large, the exercise of this privilege is dangerous in the extreme. It is sure to be abused—to add strength to oppression, and accumulate new afflictions upon humble industry.

It is but very recently that commerce, manufactures and the arts have been considered of sufficient importance to attract the notice and the care of government. In whatever government attention to these interests is found, it is a *democratic* feature; it is a partial, and as experience has proved a most salutary application of the utilitarian principle. About the middle of the seventeenth century, the celebrated John De Witte induced the republic of Holland to pass a law regulating its traffick with foreign nations. At the same time Oliver Cromwell procured the passage of the Navigation act. At this time Holland was a republic, and England a commonwealth. These were the first serious attempts to draw the private occupations of men into the policy of nations, and each of these acts in its turn, as it had an opportunity of being felt, made its respective nation master of the wealth of the world.

The establishment of the Patent Office is another pregnant illustration of the application of this principle to the administration of the affairs of government. The Patent Office is no part of the state; it is not necessary to the protection of person or property; and if improvements were now made under the patronage and for the exclusive benefit of a few great people, who conduct the government and monopolize trade, it would unquestionably be unjust to tax the people for the purpose of rewarding these favorites. But if, as with us, the benefits as well as the burthens are equally distributed among all, it becomes another example of those collateral advantages which government, administered upon this principle, may safely secure to the people.

It is remarkable that this admirable institution for the encouragement of the arts, should spring from that old and vicious system of monopolies with which government formerly encumbered and well nigh extinguished trade.

In its history two opposites meet: the first half springs from a government administered for the benefit of a few; the second, for the many. It had its origin in a clause in one of King James the First's laws regulating monopolies. Bacon was then Lord Chancellor of England, and probably inserted this admirable provision, which without the suspicion of his ignorant associates, completely reversed the character of the law. It seems contrived expressly to encourage and reward those anticipated inventions, which his *Novum Organum* had taught the world the art of making. The last pointed out the course; the first gave the impulse. The age felt the power, and darted forward in the race of improvement like the boat of Cloanthus; and like that too, cautiously avoided the rock on which its predecessors had been wrecked, or delayed in their career. The fable of the mystery-men in the house of Solomon, has become reality. The government provides at its own expense an inquisition over the whole world. All that is new in discovery or production, is collected and disseminated through the country,—mulicole rye from France, Gama grass from the West Indies, tea from China. It is thus that for the past few years, the whole earth has become the garden of the botanist, the school of the engineer, and the laboratory of the alchemist.

The age of *philosophy* has passed, and left few memorials of its existence. That of *glory* has vanished, and nothing but a painful tradition of human suffering remains. That of *utility* has commenced, and it requires little warmth of imagination to anticipate for it a reign lasting as time, and radiant with the wonders of unveiled nature.

These applications of the principle of utility to the various relations of life enable us to see it, not only in its simple form as it leads to aversion or attachment, but in its various combinations and results, and to trace all ac-

tions, however apparently disinterested or dissimilar, to this one motive. It has indeed a wonderful variety of applications. But let it be remembered that half a dozen postulates and self-evident truths are the foundation for the whole superstructure of pure geometry, and if to this be added the application of these truths to physics, the world would hardly contain the books that could be written. There is little resemblance between the definition of a straight line and the celebrated Pythagorean demonstration that the square of the hypotenuse of a right-angled triangle is equal to the sum of the squares of the two sides, so we may be able to trace but little resemblance between the great law that men will be governed by a desire of happiness, and the conduct of Regulus in tearing himself from his weeping friends at Rome, after advising a continuance of the war, and rushing to certain death among his foes at Carthage to preserve inviolate the promises given to his captors; yet in the one case as well as the other, if these first truths did not exist, these very important but remote and apparently disconnected results could not have been.

The unreasoning observer sees only the nebulae of brilliant light, but the stars from which they proceed are sunk far into the depths of heaven beyond the reach of the eye or the telescope.

Locke, and many wise and good men since his time, have declared that there is no difference between virtue and enlightened self-love.

If therefore there are yet to be found in our schools any remains of the fopperies and disguises of the old philosophy about abstract good and the love of virtue, away with them! and let our youths be taught to refer every action public or private to an enlarged utility. Knowledge is virtue—that is, a clear and distinct perception that a given

act is for our benefit will insure its performance; and to suppose that that act must not necessarily be virtuous, is blasphemy against the Creator of the universe.

Let then the whole end of education be to enlighten that perception. Let every appeal be openly and directly made to utility. *Let the student be taught to feel, that, properly viewed, it becomes an elevating not a debasing motive. The appeal must be effective, for it coincides with all the instincts and impulses of our nature. It is in this way that knowledge may finally secure its object and triumph over the perversity of our moral as well as physical nature. It is upon a generation of generous youths refined and elevated in this manner, and habituated in every thing they do to look upon it in the light of the most enlarged and liberal utility, that our government, built up out of the fragments of a thousand states, will rest and be perpetuated.

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